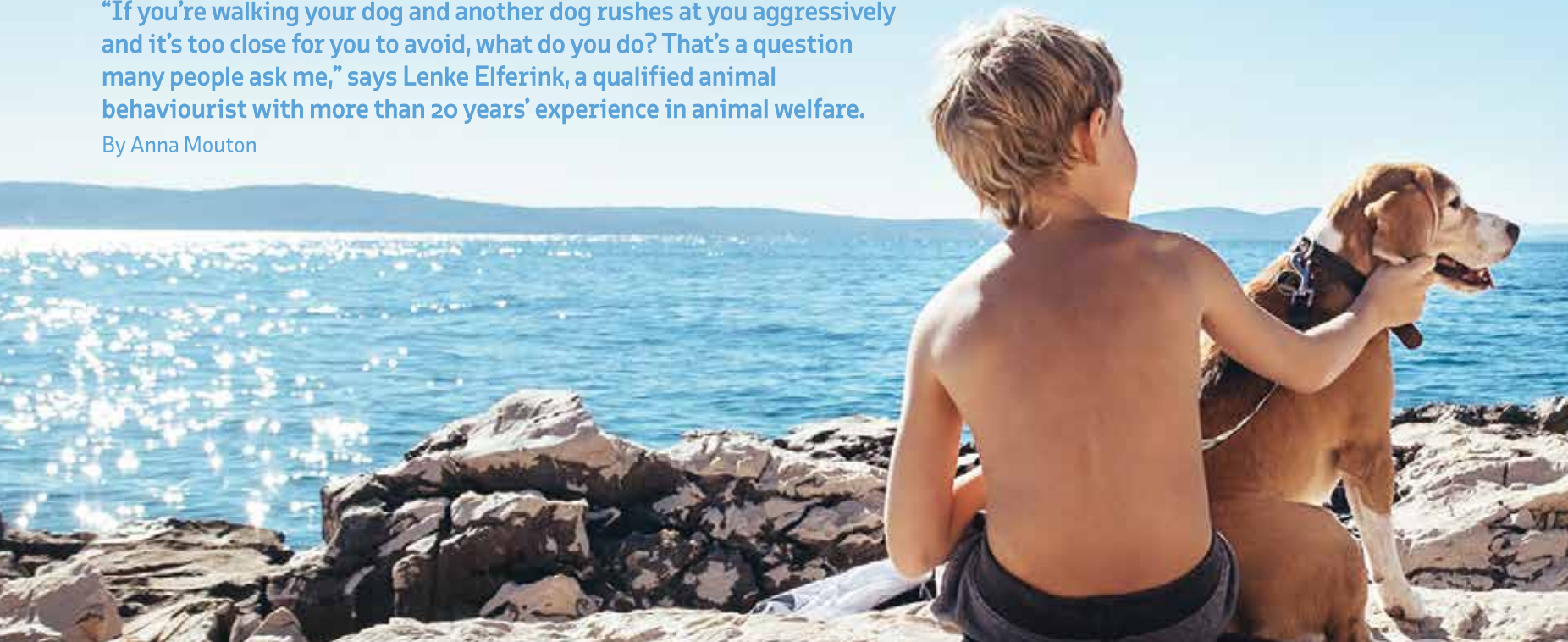


KEEP YOUR DOG SAFE THIS SUMMER

The best advice for dealing with canine conflict

“If you’re walking your dog and another dog rushes at you aggressively and it’s too close for you to avoid, what do you do? That’s a question many people ask me,” says Lenke Elferink, a qualified animal behaviourist with more than 20 years’ experience in animal welfare.

By Anna Mouton



The holidays are here and many of us look forward to spending more time outdoors chilling with our pets. The downside is that the higher number of people walking dogs leads to an increase in conflict. “I guarantee you’re going to start seeing unpleasantness within the next month,” confirms Lenke, “however, there are so many ways you can avoid it.”

Start by being proactive. “Have a 360-degree awareness. Be aware of your environment, not on your phone while you’re walking your dog,” cautions Lenke. Know your dog: Is she socialised? Is she sociable? Can she stay calm in unfamiliar, unexpected, or even chaotic situations? If not, avoid the crowds and try walking at times or in areas where you are less likely to meet other dogs.

Don’t make the mistake of thinking a wagging tail is friendly — look at body language.

Be alert. When you see another dog approaching, evaluate the situation. Is the other dog friendly? “Don’t make the mistake of thinking a wagging tail is friendly — look at body language. If that wagging tail is loose and it’s a nice s-shape with a soft rhythm, chances are it’s signalling play. If that tail is tight and vibrating tensely, that’s aggression.”

The best response to a potentially hostile dog is to stay out of its way. The same goes for unfamiliar dogs running free. Turn around or take an alternative route before they spot you and head in your direction. Be alert to signs of trouble when dogs come up to you. “If I see an approaching animal and everything — eyes, ears, nose, body, tail

— is aiming at me: those are big red flags because that dog is hunting,” warns Lenke. “When you see this, stop and back off. Don’t turn around and walk away. Keep your eyes on the approaching animal and increase the distance between you. You’ll notice as the space increases, that the dog will start to relax. As soon as you see his posture relaxing, that’s when you can turn around.”

In some situations, an aggressive dog may be on top of you before you can react. What then? “Drop your leash. The natural human reaction is to pull the leash tighter. Trust me, your dog’s instincts are way better than yours,” urges Lenke. “Unless you are certain that your dog will pick a fight and cause mayhem, drop your leash.”

If the worst happens and a fight breaks out, there is little you can do, according to Lenke. “Never put your hands near their heads — they will



2.



bite and you really will bleed. Rather try to get a leash around the waist of one of the dogs and pull back so it tightens, then tie it to a tree or a post. If you have another leash, get it around the waist of the second dog and apply pressure. At some point the dogs will release their jaws when you can pull to separate them and hold them apart. “Don’t stop pulling until both dogs are out of each other’s sight. Then get them to the vet.”

PICKING UP THE PIECES

“Luckily in most such cases the injuries are manageable,” says Dr Maarten van Dalsen of Bergview Veterinary Hospital. “Occasionally it happens that a really small dog gets attacked by a big dog and it ends in tragedy, but that’s fairly rare.”

Dogs that are confined to a yard tend not to be socialised and are more likely to be involved in a fight. In contrast, dogs that grow up in areas where everyone goes walking learn to play nicely with other dogs. Maarten recalls his experiences while practising overseas. “You think of how many dogs there are in England and you almost never see a fight. I worked at a pet emergency service for three years and saw emergencies that you wouldn’t believe, but virtually never bite wounds. Why not? Because those dogs are walked and get socialised from day one.”

Maarten advises people to keep their dogs on a leash, especially if they’re new to walking or new to an area. Check your collar and lead to make sure they’ll hold if your dog suddenly pulls. Collars should be secure – many aggressive interactions start with a dog slipping her collar.

“If your dog is used to a harness, I think it’s a great way to keep control,” says Maarten. “You can often grab a smaller dog away from a fight.

Always take your dog to the vet immediately if he has wounds to the chest or abdomen as these may have penetrated into a body cavity.

What should you do when your dog has been in a brawl? “Try to evaluate the fight. Was it one quick bite or was it a full-blown fight,” offers Maarten. “Next thing to consider: was my Yorkshire Terrier bitten by a German Shepherd or was my German Shepherd bitten by a Yorkshire Terrier? If someone tells me that there’s no blood but a Yorkshire Terrier was bitten by a German Shepherd, I say, ‘Get her here.’ Because she probably has lung trauma and although she’s not showing any signs now, in three hours she’ll need oxygen.”

Always take your dog to the vet immediately if he has wounds to the chest or abdomen as these may have penetrated into a body cavity. Penetrating wounds quickly lead to serious complications. Wounds on extremities are usually not life-threatening, but you should still contact your vet. “Don’t underestimate the pain. Don’t judge by the size of the wound, because the pain is caused by the crushing force of the bite – the severe bruising,” explains Maarten.

Resist the temptation to give your pet paracetamol. If you’re out in the middle of nowhere and you can’t take your dog to a vet, call your regular vet and seek advice. Ask if you can send a WhatsApp picture. Don’t do nothing.

“If you wonder whether you need to take him to the vet, you probably do. And if you wait then you’re going to end up with severe swelling and

infection and the whole process just becomes more complicated and more expensive,” Maarten concludes. “And if you wonder whether the dog is in pain, it probably is. And it likely will be ten times worse by the next day.”

GETTING THROUGH THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

“I don’t know how it’s come to be acceptable to let your dog run completely out of control into someone else’s space,” says Vicki Hudson, ecological co-ordinator with Cape Nature and experienced dog trainer. “Would you let your children do that to strangers? Dogs are part of our human society and we don’t consider that socially acceptable behaviour so there should be certain boundaries.”

Vicki’s own dogs work alongside her in conservation. Her two Malinois are highly skilled detection dogs and help researchers locate endangered species like the geometric tortoise. Like many of us, she finds the holiday season challenging and does her best to avoid confrontations with unfamiliar dogs.

“I walk at off-peak times and in not-as-popular dog walking places where dogs are allowed. So I’ll come to town on a Sunday morning instead of going to the beach with the rest of the dog crowd,” describes Vicki. “I’ll walk around the streets with my dogs on a leash. It’s a quiet time in town and there are lots of smells – the dogs get tired just from smelling!”

Vicki agrees with the importance of staying alert while walking. “I’ll size up the other dog to see whether I should walk past it. There are times that I’ll just make a detour because it’s not worth the risk,” she says.

“I’ve also become quite vocal. If I see people coming along, I’ll shout

3.



from afar, ‘Please put your dog on a leash. Please call your dog away.’ And if dogs run towards you, stop and keep your own dogs close to you. That buys some time for the owner of the approaching dogs to catch up.”

Vicki believes that a little consideration would prevent most conflicts. “I also enjoy having my dog off-leash. But if I see another dog, I’ll put mine on a leash and only take it off once I’ve passed by. If everyone did that – especially when they see that the other person’s dog is on a leash – there would be fewer problems.”

Owners often don’t appreciate the impact of their dogs. “Do you know what it feels like to be rushed by strange dogs? I have sympathy for people who are scared of dogs because it can be frightening to be on the receiving end. Not everyone was brought up with dogs or is comfortable with them,” she explains.


“And be respectful of size differences. People will say, ‘Oh but he’s friendly,’ when their big dog runs up to a small dog. How would you behave if an elephant ran up to you and you did not know whether he is friendly? I think we should all be a little more courteous to each other and give each other a little more space,” offers Vicki. Wise words to consider – even if you’re not a dog walker!

1. Don’t allow your dog to make contact unless both dogs know each other well.
2. Going to the beach is fun when your dog is well-socialised.
3. The safest option is to keep your dog on a lead.


TEACH YOUR DOG THE TRICK THAT COUNTS

"Recall is genuinely a life-saving command. If you haven't had time for puppy school or dog training, just teach the one command of recall," stresses Lenke. "If your dog is off-leash and misbehaving or aiming at the road – if you've taught the recall you can control that situation."

- The first step is to choose a recall phrase. Lenke suggests not using the dog's name. "Most people will call the name when they want to yell at the animal. For a recall it's best not to use the animal's name, because you don't want to poison the recall."
- Next, identify what reward works for your dog. "For some dogs a piece of cucumber will work; a piece of biltong for others; or a toy; or a cuddle-kiss. You have to find an incentive that is sufficient for the dog to want to come to you."

- Make sure the reward is readily at hand everywhere inside your house. Then call your dog at random times throughout the day. Start by rewarding the dog even if it just looks at you, then reward him when he takes a step towards you and finally reward him only when he comes to you.
- Once the dog is completely reliable indoors, take him to your garden and repeat the process. Thereafter you can train him outside the yard, initially on a long lead (Lenke recommends a length of five meters). Keep training until the dog comes every time you call, regardless of the environment. "A lot of dogs obey the command at home but you need to teach them that the command applies everywhere," explains Lenke.
- "To teach a recall generally takes about six weeks. It's actually very easy to teach," says Lenke, "but it takes 100 percent commitment from the human." 



 Products available at your nearest Agrimark until 24 December 2018.

Trusty Dog Food 25kg - R275 | Montego Monty & Me Essential 20kg - R239 | Montego Classic Adult Dog Food 10kg - R179 | Marltons Hoof Chews 6 pack - R20 | Montego Chewies Tubs 500g - R49 each | Neon Dog Collar | Neon Dog Lead



ADULT



PUPPY AVAILABLE NOW

Trusty™ is manufactured by
AVI Products (Pty) Ltd.
www.aviproducts.co.za
Tel: 031 – 766 0016 – Fax: 031 – 766 0021
E-mail: info@aviproducts.co.za

TRUSTY
Complete Nutrition

-  Glossy skin and coat
-  Quality ingredients
-  Sound bones and joints

PROTEIN 20%

**ideal for you,
ideal for me.**

Ideal Cat Food:

-  High Quality
-  Scientifically Formulated
-  Fully Balanced
-  Highly Digestible

ideal
SUPREME ADULT CAT

Toll free number: 080 766 0016
www.idealpetfood.co.za





Of jy nou bos toe, strand toe, of net tuis bly hierdie Feesseisoen, Wagworld het die perfekte geskenk vir jou viervoet-vriend. Wagter verdien mos ook 'n lekker bederf. Ons topverkopers is nou beskikbaar by uitgesoekte Agrimark winkels.



Besoek graag ons webtuiste,
www.wagworld.co.za
om ons volledige
reeks produkte te besigtig.



Available at your
nearest Agrimark

